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SUBJECT: MONGOLIAN ENVIRONMENT MINISTER RECEIVES UPDATE
ON USG COOPERATION AND MENDS FENCES

REF: ULAANBAATAR 319

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¶1. (SBU) Charge, accompanied by Econ/Coml Chief (also covering EST issues), called April 27 on Minister of Nature and Environment Erdenebaatar. Charge' congratulated Erdenebaatar on his recent appointment as Minister and also for attending post's Earth Day river clean-up on April 22 (reftel). Econoff reviewed wildlife trafficking initiatives by the USG including plans by US Fish and Wildlife Service staff to visit Mongolia in early June and U.S. DOS fund availability to send Mongolian customs officials to a mid-June training in Vladivostok with Russian and Chinese officials.

¶2. (SBU) Econoff also urged Mongolia to join the UNEP Mercury Partnership focusing on the use of mercury by small scale and artisanal miners, a growing problem in Mongolia. Minister Erdenebaatar expressed interest in all three programs described and in expanding U.S.-Mongolia environmental cooperation. Charge also plugged U.S. environmental technology expertise.

¶3. (SBU) Finally, the Charge' and Econoff expressed concern regarding an MNE-related official's overstay in the U.S. after being referred by MNE for a visa as part of a group trip. Minister Erdenebaatar officially apologized and stated that all MNE officials involved in the case, which occurred under the previous Minister's administration, had been dismissed and were no longer employed by MNE. (COMMENT: This was a positive step in mending fences, but post will continue to give MNE visa applications full and careful scrutiny - distrust and verify, for the time being.)

Goldbeck